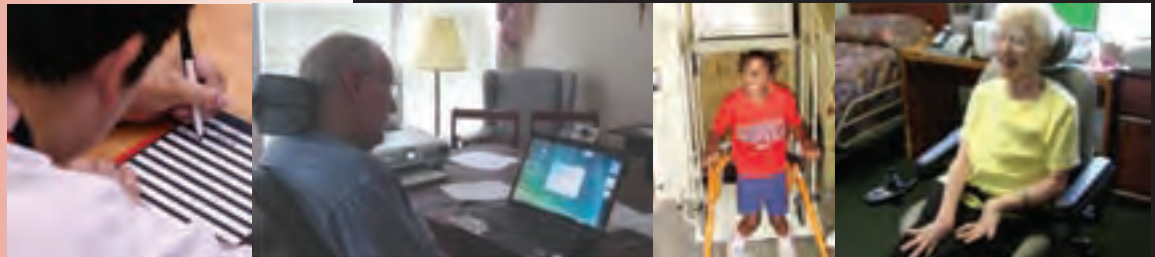


# **Assistive Technology Transforming Lives...**



Missouri Assistive Technology  
Annual Report 2008



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## Assistive Technology . . . Transforming Lives

When asked to reflect on what Missouri Assistive Technology does for Missourians with disabilities, the theme of transforming lives was repeated over and over again. The dictionary defines “transform” as “to change completely in form or function” or “to change so as to make better or more attractive”. Regardless of type of device or service - obtaining a recycled wheelchair, being able to independently use the telephone and internet, having your bathroom made accessible, or trying out an augmentative communication device that lets you communicate freely, obtaining assistive technology does indeed transform lives.

The federal government began investing in state assistive technology programs 20 years ago when President Reagan signed into law the first Assistive Technology Act on August 19, 1988. Missouri received it's first federal grant in 1991 and has since established a wide array of programs and services that provide access to assistive technology for Missourians with all types of disabilities. The Missouri Assistive Technology Council is extremely proud of the programs and services we offer today as highlighted in this annual report. We hope all who read this report share in our passion and commitment to expand access to assistive technology so that every life can be transformed.

Council Chairperson,  
Sharon LaRoussa





### Accessible Voting Equipment

Six years since passage of the national Help America Vote Act (HAVA), there remain important issues with the availability of accessible voting equipment. MoAT has continued its leadership role in this area through national presentations, Congressional testimony and the development of technical assistance documents. MoAT efforts have educated stakeholders about the accessibility level of voting equipment currently on the market and about the need for Americans with all types of disabilities to have the chance to cast their votes independently and privately.



## Accessible Print Alternatives for Students with Disabilities

Work has continued to improve the ability of schools to provide accessible educational materials for students unable to use standard print materials because of disabilities. MoAT was designated as the state contact for local school districts who have students with disabilities who need alternative formats for materials that are in the textbook file repository set up under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. During the year, the federal Department of Education awarded a grant to a 15-state consortium, including MoAT, to help develop systems for identifying, acquiring, and using accessible instructional materials.

## Missouri Disability Legislative Listserv

MoAT's legislative listserv kept more than 400 individuals and organizations up-to-date during the 2008 state General Assembly session on the implications and status of bills and appropriations affecting Missourians with disabilities. Bills on the home access tax credit, accessible textbooks, Medicaid, special education, and other disability/assistive technology topics were among those tracked throughout the session. Individuals were able to subscribe to the listserv at no cost.



## Power Up 2008 Attendee Comments

**"I got hands-on time with new products I had only heard about!"**

**"I really enjoyed the conference, that was a new and very rewarding experience for me!"**

**"I had a great time --- it was very educational --- and I'm looking forward to attending the conference again in the future!"**

**"Keynotes fantastic!"**

**"As always, we love to attend Power Up!"**



## Power Up 2008 Conference & Expo

Two power-packed days full of assistive technology training, networking, and hands-on learning describe the annual Power Up conference and expo. Attendees were inspired by international speaker and former teacher of the visually impaired, Joan Brock (pictured top right), who is also blind. The youth of *The Great American Signers* (pictured above) performed songs in sign language at the closing luncheon. Exhibitors from across the country showcased their new and established AT products and services for the 538 participants. Each year information is updated at <http://at.mo.gov/> for the spring conference & expo.

## Other Training

In addition to the Power Up participants, 2425 Missourians received training on assistive technology by MoAT staff; and 1001 received training through 137 other events by MoAT contract staff. MoAT staff assist persons with disabilities and other community members through phone and email. Assistance is provided in obtaining assistive technology, securing device funding, accessing the various MoAT programs discussed in this report, and gaining disability policy knowledge. During this fiscal year, MoAT staff handled 10,149 inquiries and requests for information and assistance by telephone and email.

## KAT Program Update

So many Missouri families struggle with the costs of assistive technology for their children with disabilities. Equipment like wheelchair lifts for vans, ramps for homes, speech, vision and hearing devices can cost thousands of dollars.

MoAT's Kids Assistive Technology (KAT) grant program is a funding resource for low to moderate income families when no other options are available. Program funds are provided by the Department of Health and Senior Services - Bureau of Special Health Care Needs. During this year, families of 79 children with disabilities were helped with \$162,536 in KAT funds to acquire a wide variety of devices and equipment needed for development, independence, and recreation.

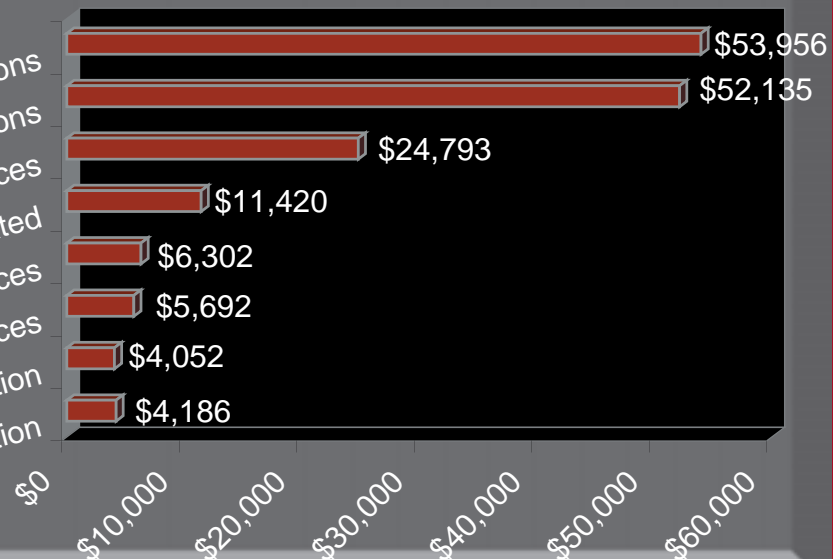


## Person Spotlight

**Alexandria is an 8-year old with cerebral palsy who lives in St. Louis. Her parents' application to the Kids Assistive Technology (KAT) program was funded for a lift because the entryway into the house was too steep for a ramp. "I can get my daughter in and out of the house now without worrying about hurting myself or her", Alexandria's mom said. "She can even operate the lift herself when she's on her way outside to play basketball!"**

KAT - Dollars Expended by Type of AT

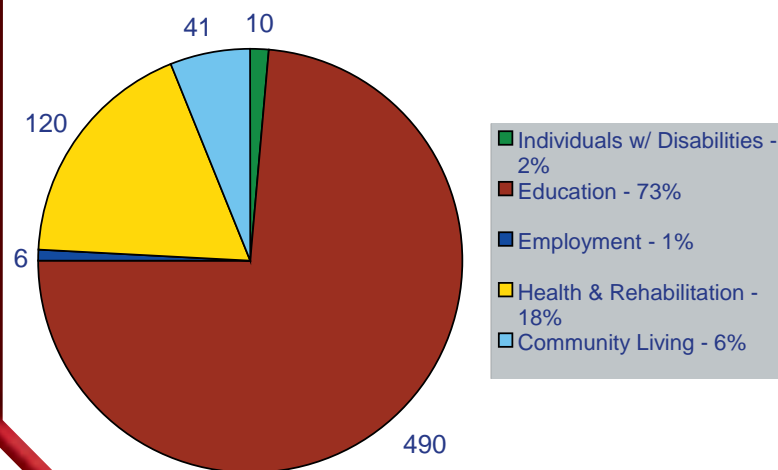
Environmental (Home) Adaptations  
Vehicle Modifications  
Mobility/Positioning Devices  
Computers & Related  
Hearing Devices  
Vision Devices  
Speech Communication  
Daily Living & Recreation







ETC - # Loans by Borrower Type



### Person Spotlight

Imagine being five years old and thirsty. All you want is a drink. Now imagine being five years old, wanting a drink, being in a hospital intensive care unit and not being able to speak. You sign "drink" when the nurse comes in, but the nurse doesn't know sign language and mistakenly interprets your gesture as you wanting to suck your thumb, not quench your thirst. This experience was but one of many frustrations, misinterpretations and moments of confusion faced by Luke prior to his obtaining an augmentative communication device.

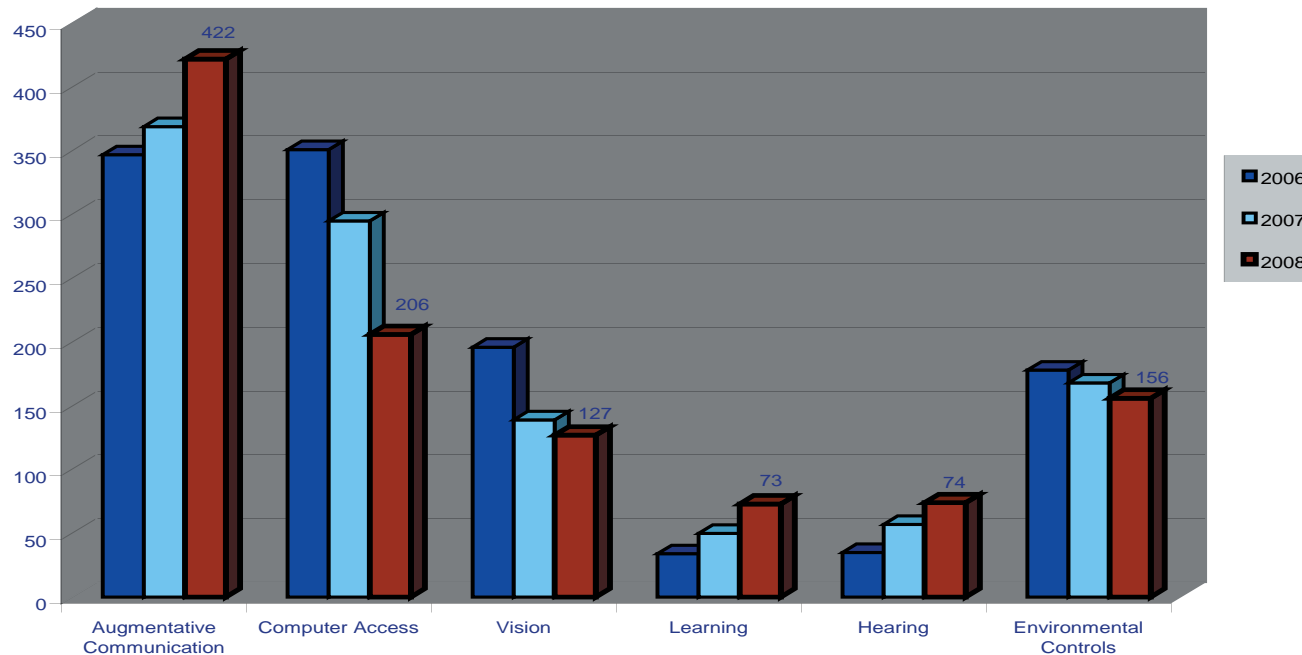
Luke, who has Down Syndrome, was one of several hundred individuals for whom assistive devices were borrowed through the ETC Program this past year. Staff from the Assistive Technology Evaluation Center in Columbia evaluated Luke to determine if he was an appropriate candidate for augmentative communication. In so doing, they presented a variety of different devices for him to try. It was determined that Luke had the skills necessary to be able to use a dynamic communication device. The parties involved felt that before committing to the expense of the device, a trial period to determine if Luke would respond positively to the device and functionally use it to communicate was necessary. They contacted ETC and arranged to borrow a ChatPC, which was loaned to Luke for several weeks. The feedback of Luke's teacher and therapist during the trial period was positive and as a result, funding was obtained. Now, when Luke visits with medical professionals, he can much more effectively express his wants and needs. Maybe now he'll get a drink when he's thirsty.



## ETC Program Update

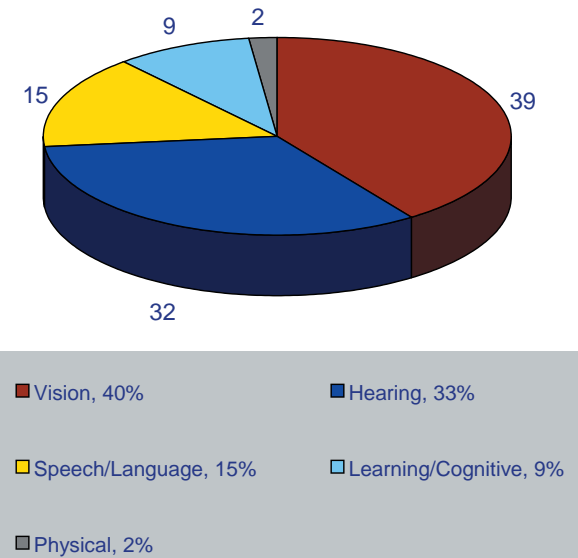
Can the device be used? Will the device be used? These two questions are the cornerstones of evaluating children and adults for assistive technology. The only true way to answer these questions is by conducting trials that compare different devices in multiple environments. Providing assistive devices to schools and agencies across Missouri so they may perform device trials is the primary function of the ETC Program. Since its inception, ETC has striven to build a varied inventory of devices that is not only current, but also meets the needs of those working with assistive technology. The program maintains an inventory of over 1,400 devices that range from the low-end to the high-end of the technology spectrum. At the end of this past fiscal year, a total of 1,058 devices were loaned to borrowers from all corners of the state. By far, augmentative communication devices are the most requested items out of the program, followed by computer adaptations and environmental controls. Follow up surveying reveals that a significant majority of individuals are highly satisfied with the program and its level of service.

Devices Loaned by Category: 3-Year Trend





Funded Applications by Disability Type



### Person Spotlight

About 100 miles south of St. Louis, tucked among some of the highest peaks in the Ozark Mountains lies the little town of Ironton, home of the Arcadia Valley R-II School District. The district's student body is comprised of roughly 1,100 students, among them Courtney. A senior, Courtney has a primary disability of visual impairment. In consultation with Courtney and after conducting a series of device trials, the district felt the combination of screen magnification software, speech-to-text software and a handheld electronic magnifier would benefit her academically. The district, like dozens of others across the state, submitted to the AT Reimbursement Program a request for assistance with purchasing the devices.

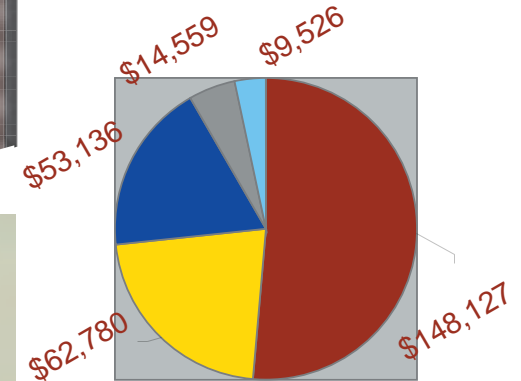
"The assistive technology," remarks Courtney, "has been specifically helpful, especially in my communication arts and mathematics" classes. The screen magnification software and speech-to-text software enhance her ability to compose papers and interface with the Internet. Her ability to see worksheets, newspapers and other documents she needs is aided through the use of her handheld electronic enlarger. Courtney noted the assistive technology is also a boon to her teachers who don't have to continuously modify her assignments; she's able now to use the same versions as her non-disabled classmates.

Possessed of a deep passion and love for music, the future for Courtney includes attending Mineral Area College in nearby Park Hills to study music. And beyond that, her goal is to one day work in the recording industry.

## ATR Program Update

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Special Education again this year entrusted MoAT with funds to operate the AT Reimbursement Program. This program helps school districts offset the cost of purchasing assistive technology for individual students who have AT written into their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Through an application process, schools are able to receive reimbursement of AT purchases between \$1,000 and \$5,000. Such “higher end” devices as Braille embossers, augmentative communication devices, computer access systems and assistive listening systems comprise the bulk of items covered. School districts have noted the importance of this funding source and how the AT funded has had positive impacts on the students they serve.

**ATR: Dollars by Device Type**

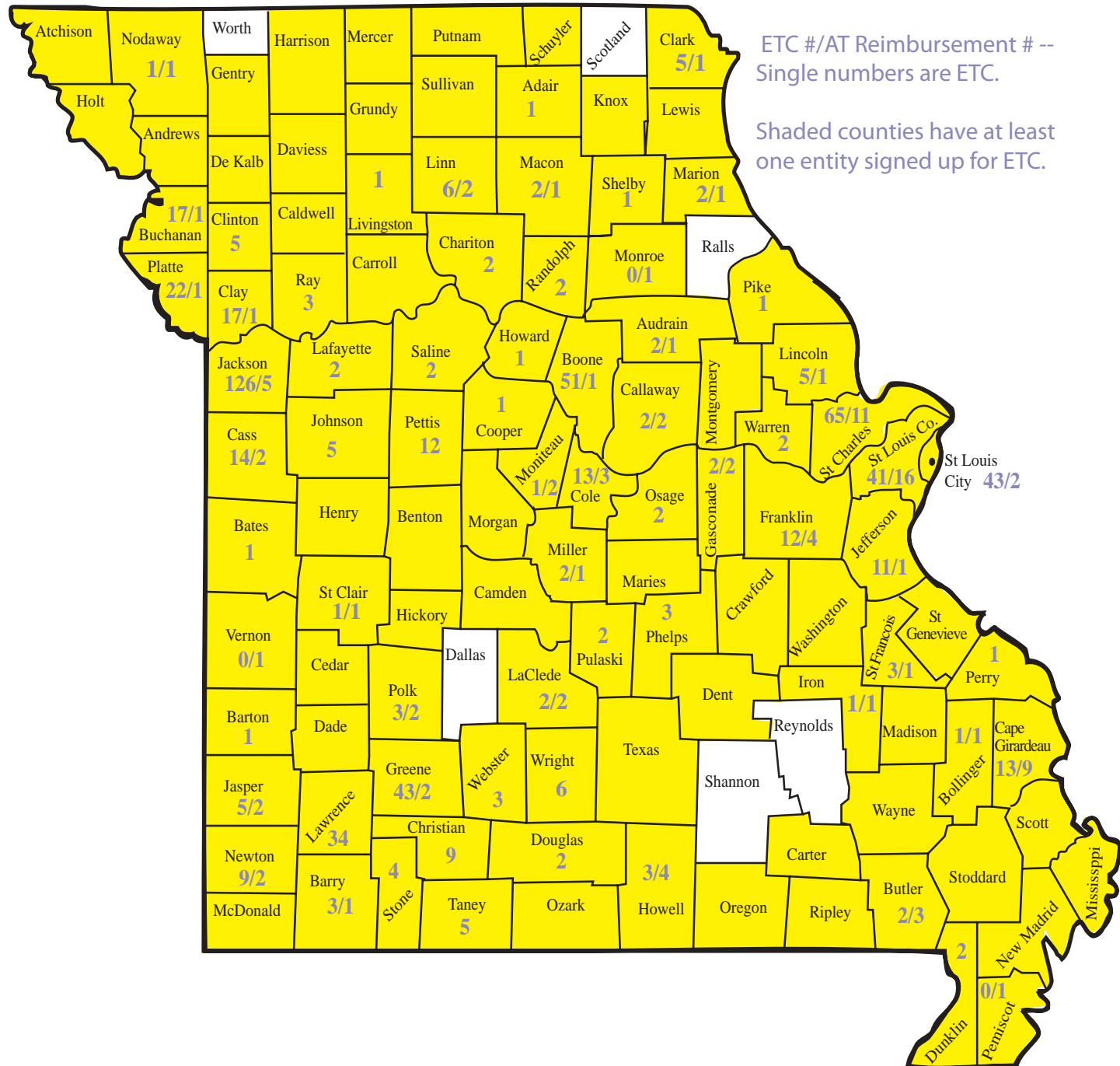


**Total:**  
**\$288,128**

- Vision, 51%
- Hearing, 22%
- Speech/Language, 19%
- Learning/Cognitive, 5%
- Physical, 3%

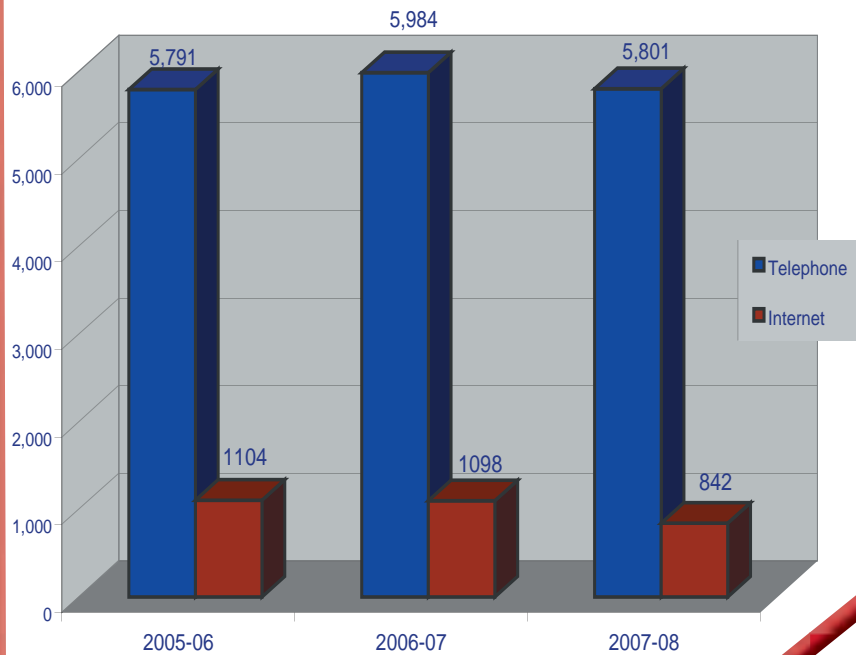


# ETC & AT Reimbursement Presence and Distribution by County 7/1/07 - 6/30/08





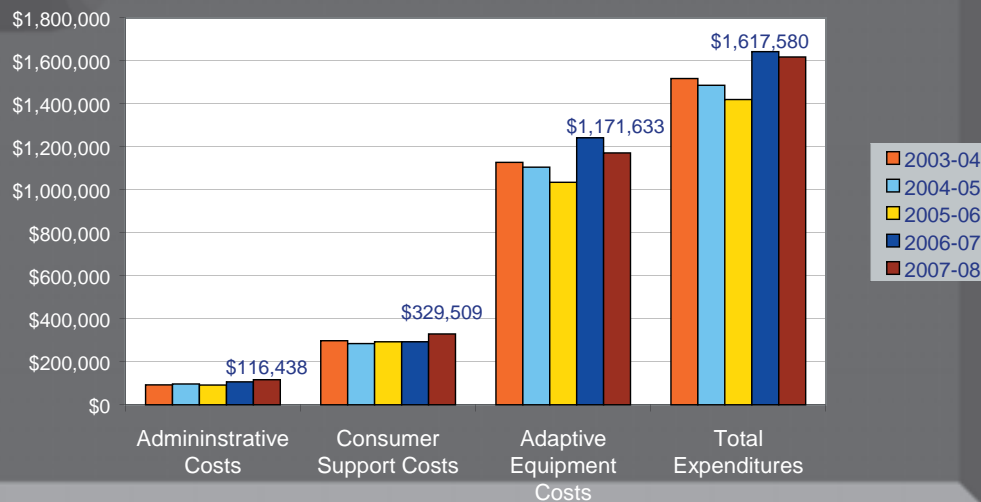
TAP - # Devices Provided



## Telecommunications Access Program (TAP)

For Missourians with disabilities, two Telecommunications Access Programs (TAP for Telephone and TAP for Internet) make purchasing products, applying for services, searching for jobs and even attending college classes via the telephone and Internet commonplace. TAP provides adaptive telephone and adaptive computer equipment needed for basic access to telephone and Internet telecommunications for eligible Missourians with hearing, vision, mobility and other disabilities.

TAP Yearly Expenditures



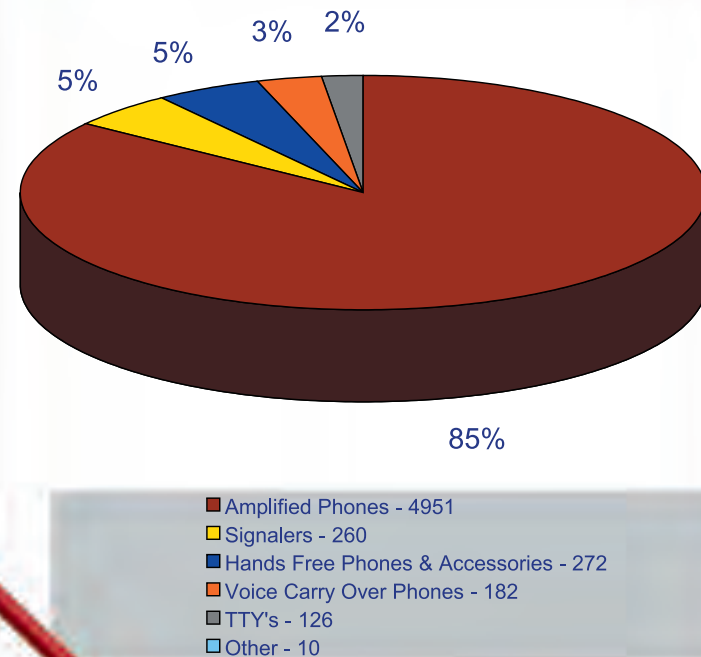
A critical component of TAP is the delivery of consumer support services to assist individuals with disabilities select the most appropriate adaptive equipment and to support installation and use of the equipment provided. Adaptive equipment costs are 73% of TAP expenditures and consumer support costs make up 20% of total expenditures. Administrative costs continue to be very low at 7%.

## TAP for Telephone Update

This year, 5801 adaptive telephone devices were provided by TAP for Telephone. A network of Independent Living Centers provides consumer support and helps ensure appropriate equipment matches through the use of demonstration devices. People with hearing loss comprise 76% of program recipients, while 18% have vision loss, and 4% have mobility issues which keep them from using traditional phones.

Follow-up data from program beneficiaries indicates that 46% had been unable to use the phone for 6 years or more and 12% had been unable to use the phone for more than 20 years.

## TAP for Telephone - Type of Equipment



## Person Spotlight

Rural Advocates for Independent Living in Macon is one of the centers that provides TAP for Telephone consumer support. Through the program they have helped many people regain contact with family and friends by phone again.

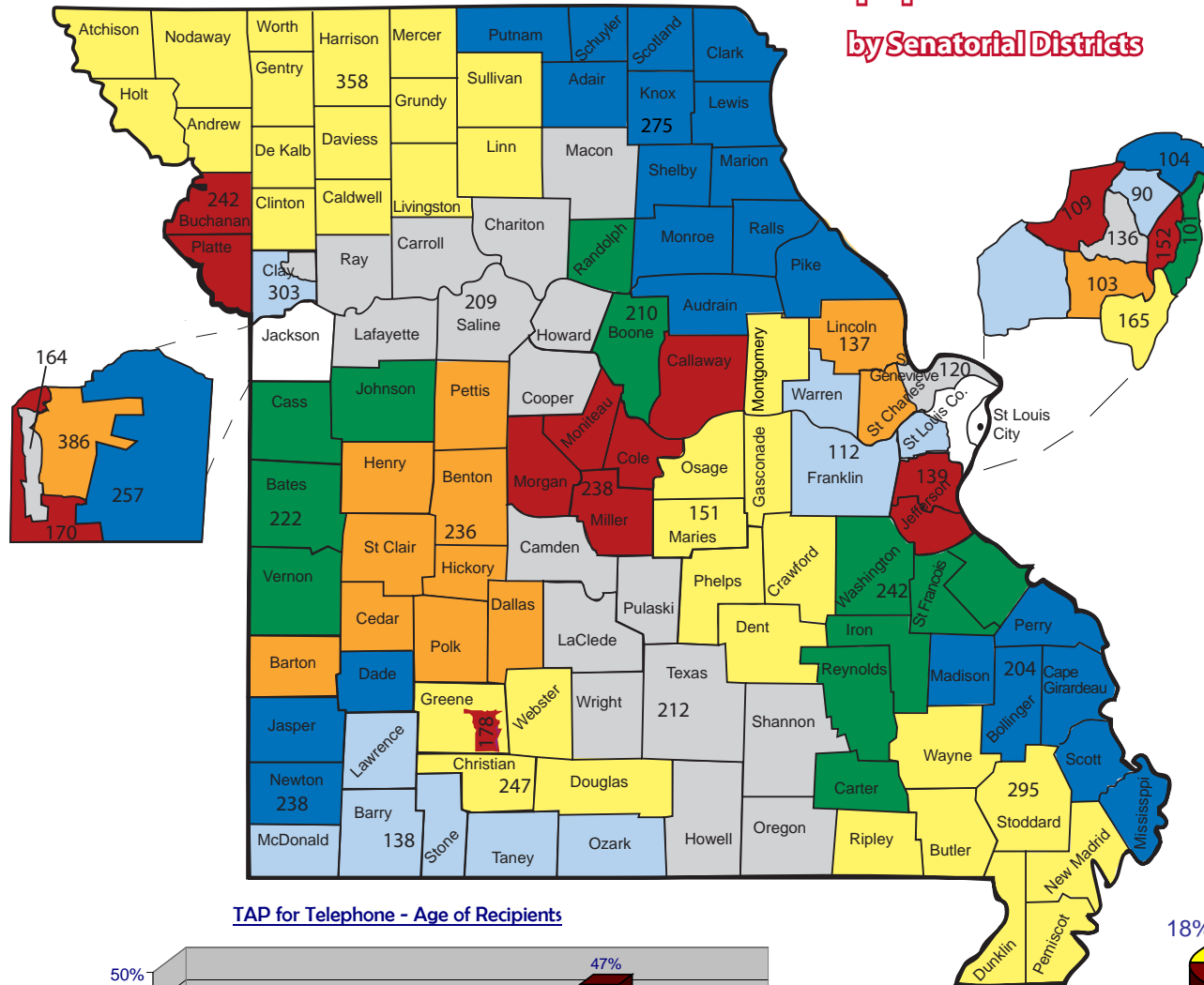
Erika has been a consumer in the RAIL program since March 2006. She was a school teacher during her working career. She has severe hearing loss and wears hearing aids. Her caseworker, Jean, has never been able to speak with Erika on the phone, but must do a home visit each month in order to speak to her.

When a new phone with improved technology was added to the TAP program, Jean asked Erika to try it out. Jean took a phone out with her on a home visit and plugged it in. WHAT A CHANGE! Erika could hear on the Serene HD 60 and carry on a conversation with Jean! The phone was ordered and when Erika received it, she called everyone she knew. She was just like a teenager again! In addition, Jean can now make regular phone calls to Erika.

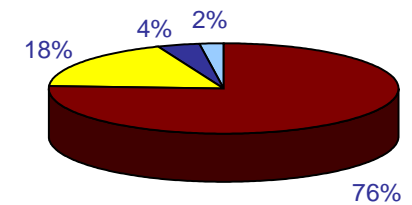


# TAP Equipment Distribution

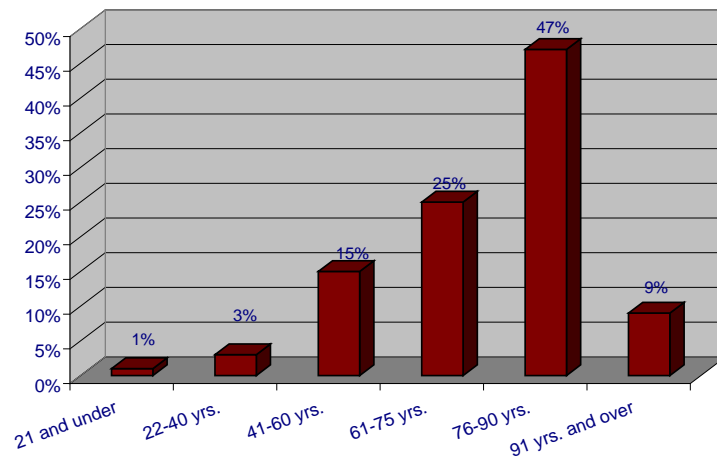
## by Senatorial Districts

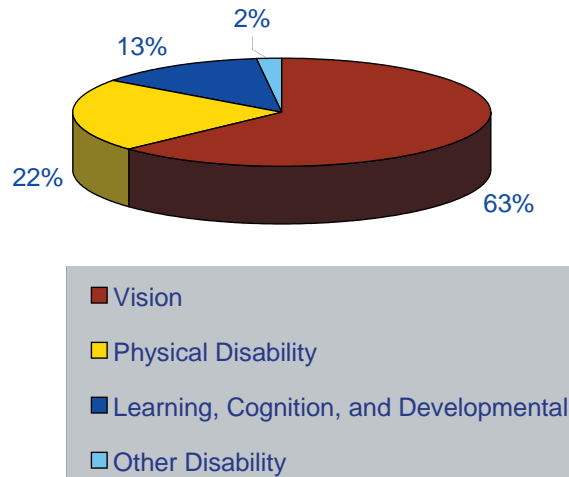
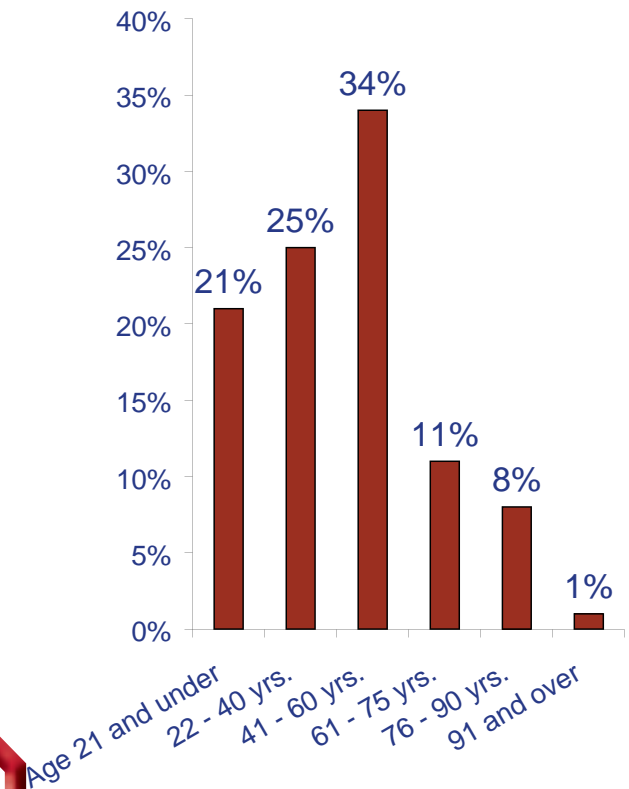


## TAP for Telephone - Disability of Recipients



## TAP for Telephone - Age of Recipients



TAP for Internet - Disability of RecipientsTAP for Internet - Age of Recipients

### Person Spotlight

Browsing the web is Frank's "cup of tea". The web provides information on many items of interest such as motorcycles, fishing, camping, scuba diving and a myriad of other information.

Through TAP for Internet Frank has received two pieces of software. The first is WYNN Reader, which is Frank's lifeline to the Internet and email, since he was not able to learn how to read. WYNN Reader translates written text to speech so Frank is able to listen/read almost all web pages. Frank is also able to do many other manipulations with text using WYNN reader such as spell checking, dictionary support for unknown words, etc. Frank also has a vision loss and has received the ZoomText program that enlarges what Frank sees on the screen.

The fishing string in the picture (next page) is Frank's own assistive technology invention. If he wears his glasses away from the computer he lays them down and then cannot remember where he left them. The fishing string reminds him to leave his glasses by his computer so that they are always available when he needs them.

Frank also represents the many veterans' who have found resources through TAP for Internet.



## TAP for Internet Update

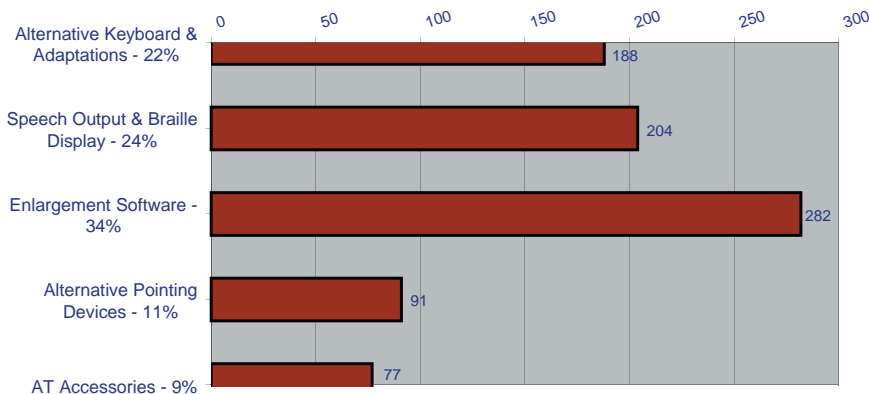
The Internet became a useful commercial tool in 1988 and then in the 1990s it found its "public face" when it became a useful tool for everyone in almost every venue including use at home. People now access their local, state and federal government information and functions, research medical information and learn about their disability, take classes, interact with relatives and friends, shop on line, etc. For most these activities enrich their lives but for some people with disabilities it has become a lifeline to all of the above activities and many more. Missouri continues to be the only state in the nation that provides people with disabilities the adaptive computer equipment they need to access the Internet and email and subsequently all of the above activities.

TAP for Internet provided 842 computer adaptations. Every county in Missouri has consumers who have received adaptive computer equipment from the Telecommunication Access Program (TAP) for Internet over the life of the program. Program applicants not only receive the needed adaptive computer equipment they also receive the training needed to use the equipment for Internet and email access.

Adaptive computer equipment recipients range in age from three years of age to over 100. People with vision disabilities continue to be among the most prolific users of the program with 63% of the equipment provided being screen reader, Braille output and enlargement software. People with physical disabilities represent 22% of the program's applicants which is an increase from last year. Consumers with reading, decoding and/or comprehension disabilities represent 6% of the program's applicants, which is a slight decrease from last year.

Sixty percent (60%) of the program's consumers report that they are using the Internet and e-mail services from one to three times a day and 66% report an increase in Internet and email usage. The overall satisfaction rate for the program is at 97%.

TAP for Internet - Type of Equipment





### Person Spotlight

Sherri and her husband Earl live in Carroll County, about 70 miles East of Kansas City. In 1985 Sherri was first diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis and has used a power wheelchair for about six years.

Until recently, the couple had never had an accessible van. In November, Sherri and Earl were approved for a low-interest Show-Me Loan to purchase a Turny lift from United Access in Columbia. The Turny is a motor-operated passenger seat that can swivel outward, lift and lower to allow a passenger transfer to and from a waiting wheelchair.

When asked about what the lift has meant to her, Sherri said "The lift has been just wonderful. It has made it so much easier to get to and from appointments, go to the grocery store and to get where we need to go." So, just like most other motorists, gas prices may now be the main barrier to traveling for Sherri and Earl!

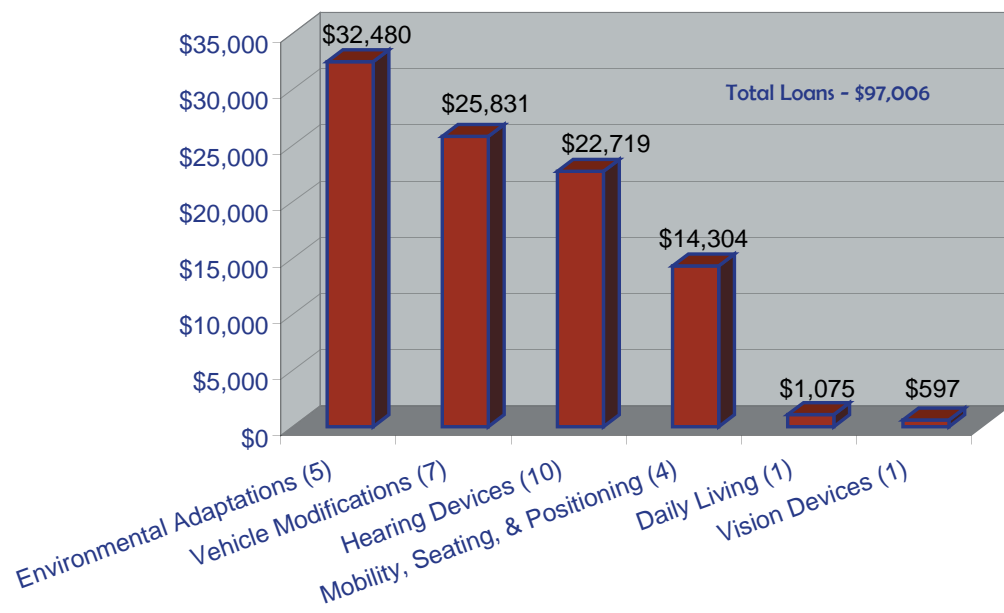
## Show-Me Loan Program Update

Finding affordable financing for assistive technology was tough for Missourians with disabilities and their family members before Show-Me Loan began. Now, with interest rates from 2% to 4%, assistive technology is within reach for more persons than ever. The program structure and operation insures a stable, permanent AT financing program for Missouri. Some of the highlights since Show-Me Loan was launched:

- \$588,000 in total loans made to 168 borrowers since the program began.
- 71 borrowers have already completely repaid their loans for a total of \$408,000 in repaid loan dollars.
- Low default rate - 1% of total dollars loaned.

During the past year, Missourians with disabilities borrowed \$97,006. The majority of dollars borrowed were used to make home access improvements such as wheelchair ramps; to make motor vehicles accessible such as adding wheelchair lifts to vans; to purchase hearing aids; or to buy customized wheelchairs. Over half of approved borrowers had annual incomes under \$30,000. The table shows the breakdown of AT purchased through Show-Me Loan.

Show Me Loans - AT by Dollars Loaned







### Person Spotlight

Mary Jo is thrilled to have a new (refurbished) power wheelchair that she bought for \$100 through the DME Recycling program, and has been proudly showing it off to others in her building. She uses it to deliver newspapers to her fellow residents and for just about every other activity in her daily life.

Mary Jo's father was an early specialist of braces and orthopedic appliances, an interest stemming from Mary Jo's cerebral palsy. She continues to wear a brace around her midsection that he made for her. Mary Jo's first "wheelchair" was a little red wagon that her sister (Judy) would use to pull her around.

Mary Jo graduated from high school in Kansas City in 1958, where she received an award given to students that got along especially well with others. She remains a very active and independent member of the community. Besides her new power wheelchair, she also has a manual wheelchair for outings with her sister. Mary Jo has 11 great nieces & nephews.



## Re-Utilization Program Update

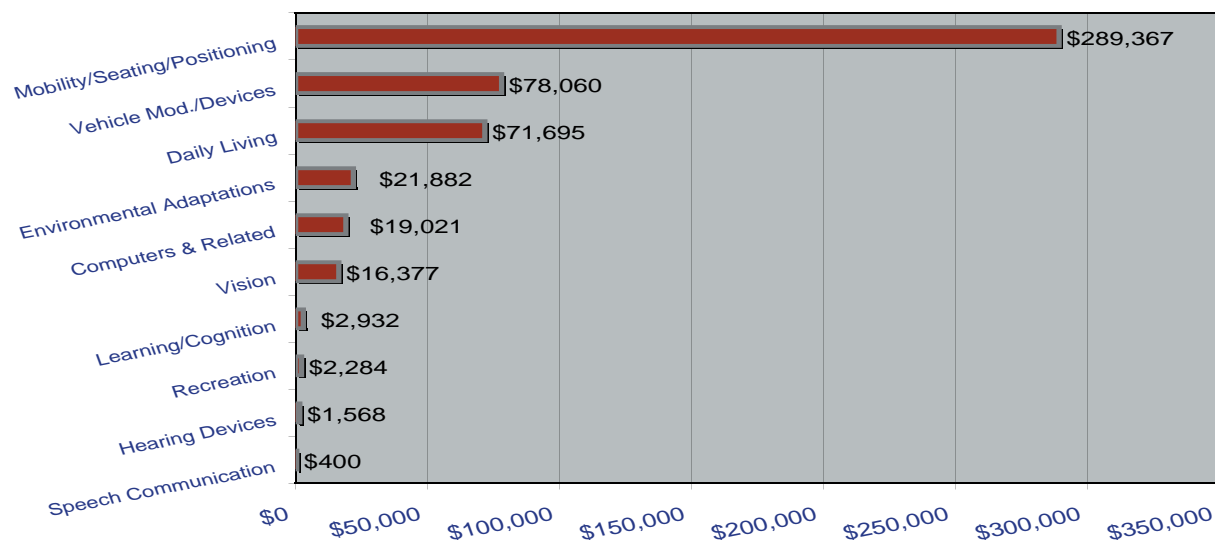
Missouri AT offers a variety of programs that assist in providing low-cost assistive technology to individuals with disabilities. The programs include a general recycling program, a refurbished computer program, and an equipment exchange program, Swap 'n Shop. These programs provided 709 recycled devices saving Missourians \$503,586 buying pre-owned over new devices.

Four regional **General Recycling** programs are funded by Missouri AT to provide access to recycled assistive devices. The programs vary according to the needs of the area served, but typically provide durable medical equipment such as manual and power wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, canes, shower chairs, positioning equipment and wheelchair parts. Devices are received through donations, refurbished if needed and made available to persons in need, at low or no cost. These programs are located in Kansas City, Farmington, Springfield and Cape Girardeau.

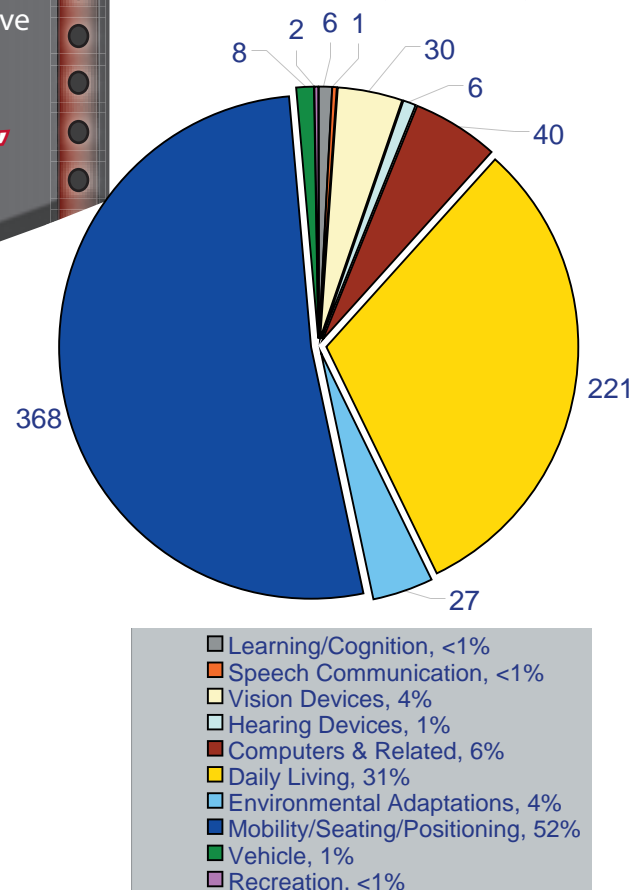
A **Refurbished Computer program** allows recipients with disabilities access to recycled computers at a reduced cost. The computers are configured with the ability to add on the adaptive equipment appropriate to the user's needs.

Missouri AT also operates a consumer-to-consumer online **Equipment Exchange program, Swap 'n Shop**. The program provides a web-based listing where individuals can list or view devices or adapted homes and vehicles available for sale. Descriptions and pricing on the equipment is provided, along with seller contact information.

Re-utilization - Savings by Device Type



Re-utilization by Device Types

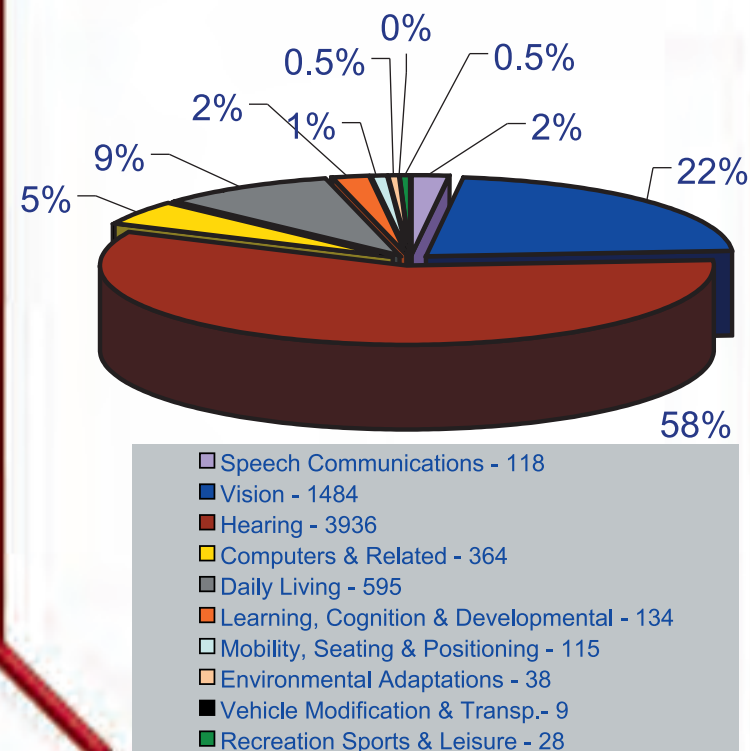


## Device Demonstration Program Update

Missouri Assistive Technology provides funding to seven regional assistive technology demonstration programs. Demonstrations are also provided by MoAT staff and contracted service providers for the Telecommunication Access Program (TAP). These hands-on demonstrations allow participants to compare the features and benefits of a particular AT device, or category of devices, enabling them to make informed choices about whether a device would meet their needs.

A total of 6821 device demonstrations were provided for 7347 individuals through centers located in Columbia, Kansas City, Springfield (2), Cape Girardeau, Gallatin and Farmington, and TAP staff and service providers.

## Demos by Device Type



## Person Spotlight

Morgan is a 20 year-old man with low vision who relocated to Missouri from Louisiana. Shortly after, he became homeless and without the assistive technology necessary to allow him to be independent in his daily activities. Through the LIFE demonstration center in Farmington, Morgan was shown writing guides, guide cane and other assistive technologies. Morgan is now living independently in his home and was able to acquire the assistive devices he needed.

David (pictured on page 19) is a 55 year-old man with low vision, who was told that his vision loss could no longer be corrected with eyeglasses alone. David visited LIFE demonstration center and was able to try various magnification options, including the *Jordy*, and was able to determine which would meet his ever-changing visual needs. The *Jordy* allows David to increase or decrease the amount of magnification needed dependent on David's needs for that particular day and activity.

### **Council Members during 2007 - 2008:**

#### **Consumer Representatives:**

**Sharon LaRoussa, Chair**  
**Chip Hailey, Chair Elect**  
**Marjorie Yates, Past Chair**  
**Pam Arbeiter**  
**Michael Goad**  
**Rita Lynch**  
**Kerri Morgan**  
**Deana O'Brien**  
**Amy Parker**

#### **Agency Representatives:**

**Jim Brinkmann - Rehabilitation Services for the Blind**  
**Vacant - Medical Services**  
**Kristin Funk (Ad hoc) - Workforce Development**  
**Gary Harbison (nominated) - Health & Senior Services**  
**Neil Harms - Vocational Rehabilitation**  
**Leone Herring - Special Education**  
**Aaron Luna - Independent Living Center**  
**Robin Rust - Mental Health**  
**Dolores Sparks - DD Planning Council**  
**Molly White - Insurance**

#### **Legislative Representatives:**

**Senator Harry Kennedy**

**Representative Kevin Threlkeld**

#### **Staff:**

**Diane Golden, Ph.D., Director**  
**Roselie Backer-Thompson, TAP Internet**  
**David Baker, Program Coordinator**  
**Marty Exline, Assistant Director**  
**Elaine Houtman, Program Coordinator**  
**Gay Jones, TAP Telephone**  
**Kristine Roof, Administrative Assistant**  
**Brenda Whitlock, Training Coordinator**



**... with MoAT delivering 7,555 assistive devices and providing support services to over 21,000 Missourians with disabilities.**

Missouri Assistive Technology  
4731 S. Cochise, Suite 114  
Independence, MO 64055  
816/373-5193 - voice  
816/373-9315 - tty  
<http://at.mo.gov>